

HAPPENINGS IN THE MOTION PICTURE WORLD

David Belasco Talks of Motion Pictures and Tells Why He Is Going Into That Field.

FROM the sawdust stage to almost perfection in one short decade is a long step, but in the eyes of a famous and prominent dramatic author, producer and director, this is the long leap made by motion pictures.

David Belasco, eminent playwright and producer, has just made his entry into the marvelous field of motion pictures, and through the Jesse L. Lasky Feature Play Company, will offer the classical productions which have made the name of Belasco famous.

When we saw Mr. Belasco he was in the studio long ago made interesting by reason of his having spent the long hours of the night there, visualizing his dreams of perfectness and atmosphere.

"Yes," he began, "movies," as we went to call them, for want of a more appropriate title, have stepped out of the empyrean stage to a state bordering close upon perfection; and why? Because the motion picture producer has learned that environment, atmosphere and the developing of moods are more essential than written explanations.

"To bring the photo-play up to the standard already attained by the drama, the motion picture producer must figure far ahead of the present mechanical way of inducing moods.

"In the future, if I may be allowed to prophesy, the staff of the motion picture producer will consist of five men—stage director, camera man, technical director, artistic director and 'mood builder'.

"By 'mood builder' I mean one man who will make a deep study of effect and cause. If the scene be one of those potent, virile affairs, sensed to cause shudders, the 'mood builder' will arrange his effects to precede the scene by atmosphere which will slowly work his auditors up to a pitch where the climax will strike the spectator at the psychological moment, after what has gone before has developed a mood susceptible to the climactic period.

"Mood builder" may be a little vague, but to better emphasize my meaning, he will be the man who will surround his players with the environment needed, thus eliminating the mechanical effect.

"The artistic director will take the minor actors in hand and herd them into one great group, and ere they step into the focus of the camera, every detail of their make-up will be gone over with a master eye. If one hair is misplaced, an eye-lash made up too heavy, wig out of uniformity with period being portrayed, shoes out of place, dress suit antiquated or any shortcoming appears, this the artistic director will doctor ere the negative devours it.

"The stage director will be free to devote his every moment to action. Action, action, the pleading cry of every producer, if left to the average director, will reach its apex. With the golden sky for a proscenium border, what are the possibilities of the photo-play director?

"Should it be necessary to show a horribly mangled arm to convey to the audience that a figure on the screen has met with an accident? Should it be neces-

sary to carry a dead body on a stretcher across the screen to convey the fact that murder has been done? Cannot an artistic director of motion pictures, by slow, dovetailing effects, a climax without resorting to the morbid?

"Perhaps I am exceeding myself in criticizing motion pictures. I have had little or no experience with them, but I do know what I like—and I know further what possibilities there are.

"I remember well the first motion picture I ever saw. It seemed silly to me, almost infantile, and I could not understand how any one could take them seriously.

"The picture, if I remember it right, was a drama in one part, and was as full of blood and thunder as could be crowded into fifteen minutes.

"The picture left the screen and a subtitle came on. The title read, 'Jean State His Father,' and forthwith Jean did that very thing. Another title explained in detail that Margery was about to elope, which she did, and then another subtitle said 'Margery and Jean Are Married.' The next picture showed the couple before the minister.

"I tried to enthuse over pictures, but to no avail."

"But have you seen the productions shown recently?" we asked Mr. Belasco.

"Indeed I have," he replied, "and what I have seen within the last few months has kindled a fertile enthusiasm.

"Take 'The Squaw Man.' It is six thousand feet, and there are but nine subtitles. The story is left to explain itself, and it does so with a perfect continuity of pictures. The atmosphere is developed and moods created with much artistry, and in 'Brewster's Millions' the action of the piece is harmonious and with just a minimum number of explanatory titles the story unfolds in excellent continuity.

"The Master Mind' also uses very few captions, and the fact that this concern did so well with their first three productions more than anything else influenced me to give my productions to Mr. Lasky.

"I decided to give my productions to the firm most likely to innovate and advance, and ere I had contracted with Mr. Lasky for the pictureization of the Belasco plays he had installed Wilfred Buckland as artistic director, Cecil B. De Mille as director general, Oscar Apfel as director and Richard Walton Tully, one of my collaborators, as director in a supervisory capacity.

"The 'Darling of the Gods' will be produced in Japan in the exact locale of the play; 'The Girl of the Golden West' will be played before the camera right in the heart of the Golden West and with the types of men and women intended.

"The 'Warrens of Virginia' and the other plays will be produced as near in the exact locale of the pieces as nature will permit.

"We hope to create new methods to replace the methods long ago outgrown.

"The motion picture has a sterling future, and I am proud to be in the field and a contributor to what the future promises."

BROADWAY IS A LANE OF FILM

"Motion pictures are still in their infancy." This is one of the commonest of "bromide" remarks, and in a sense it is accurate. If the infantile stage is still in sway in Italy we are moved to a stupefied wonder as to what maturity will produce after viewing "Cabrria."

"Stupendous" and allied expressions are the only ones that are in any way adequate in speaking of "Cabrria." It is much more than a revelation in motion pictures. It is probably the greatest single spectacle that has ever been produced in any line of entertainment. Of course, it cost a lot of money—\$250,000, it is said, and it seems cheap at that figure—besides two years of time, but to us the greatest interest is not connected with mere money matters. The real charm of this superb production is in its exemplification of what can be created when a dreamer and lover of the beautiful, such as Gabriele d'Annunzio, works with Italy's most talented scene designers and photographic geniuses. It is literal realization of a vision.

From the very first flash on the screen until the last inch of the 10,000 feet of film have passed through the projector there is such a constant succession of dazzling scenes that the most startling effects seem to be only what is expected as the end of the film approaches. Not only are the special settings which were built for the picture remarkable in themselves, but their beauty is further enhanced by delicate tints and tones and by seemingly impossible photographic effects.

As mentioned above, the scenario for "Cabrria" was written by Gabriele d'Annunzio. It deals with the wars between Rome and Carthage, which ultimately led to the complete destruction of the great African city. The play opens in the village of Cataya, on the lower slopes of Mount Etna. Cabrria is a pretty little Sicilian girl, five years of age. An eruption of the volcano destroys the palace of her parents, and in the mad flight she is carried away by her nurse, who escapes with a few of the slaves. The party is captured by Phoenician pirates and taken to Carthage. There Cabrria and her nurse are sold as slaves to the high priest of Moloch. The priest decides to sacrifice the little girl in the fiery maw of the great idol, but, thanks to the intervention of a Roman spy, who is living in Carthage, she is rescued.

From this time on Cabrria's fortune is closely connected with the affairs of Rome and Carthage. The destruction of the Carthaginian navy, Hannibal's march across the Alps and scores of other events are shown, all on a grand scale and with astounding realism.

By way of capping the climax of elaborate entertainment the film is accompanied by a complete musical drama, which interprets the moods and serves to tell the story in musical form. The work was composed by Riccardo del Parma, of the Royal Opera House at Milan. It is rendered by an orchestra of about fifty pieces and a chorus under the direction of Selli Simonson.

The public showing of "Cabrria" commences to-morrow night at the Knickerbocker Theatre, a house which has never before been used for motion pictures. We do not care to say anything more about this colossal picture lest we be taken for a press agent.

FILMS AT THE COURT.

With the opening of "The Escape" at the Court Theatre to-morrow one of the most effect and finest theatres in the city

joins the ever increasing ranks of motion picture houses for a time. We have often mentioned the work of D. W. Griffith as being the most original and polished which comes from the studios of any American film manufacturer. "The Escape" was directed by him, and it is no less distinctive than his earlier productions, while it is more novel than any of them. It is a drama of some proportions being seven reels in length, and was made at the Mutual studios.

It is no trifling feat which Mr. Griffith has accomplished in "The Escape." He has presented in a convincing story some of the most vital facts of life with perfect frankness, yet without anything of an unworthy or suggestive nature. There are a number of sordid scenes, but they are truthful and serve to create a correct atmosphere.

The general idea of the story is to show the wisdom of eugenic principles, but it is not unduly extreme. It simply points out the trouble which follows when young persons act against their own good sense because of a passing whim. The characters are drawn from widely varying strata of life. Blanche Sweet, as May Joyce, the elder daughter of a laborer, is the principal, and her acting is marked by its usual grace and sympathy. Owen Moore, as a young doctor, plays opposite her. The rest of the cast is made up of well known players, including Donald Crisp, Robert Harron, F. A. Turner, Ralph Lewis, "Tammany" Young, Mae Marsh and Fay Tincher.

The prologue of the picture is a remarkable one. It consists of a series of views of amorphous, paramorphous and other cellular organisms, as well as a few of a "high order." These views, which were taken through a microscope after weeks of careful experimentation, serve to show how eugenic principles are automatically followed by these minute forms of life. Dr. Daniel Carson Goodenow was the scientist who succeeded in taking these extraordinary pictures, and an account of his work is a story in itself.

AT THE NEWEST THEATRE.

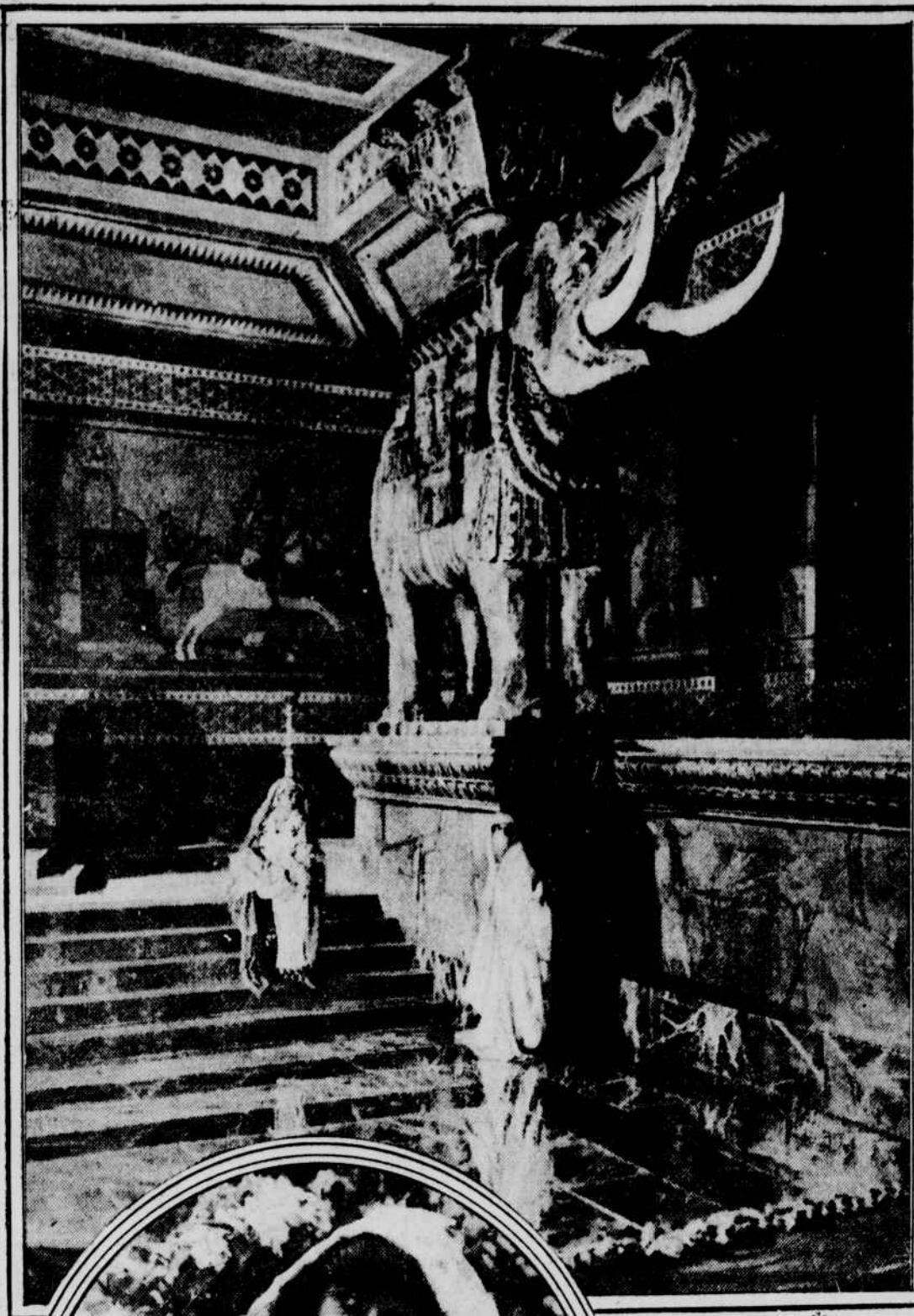
"Anthony and Cleopatra" will begin its fifth and last week at the Candler Theatre to-morrow. The picture is crowded with spectacular scenes, besides telling a story which has interested the world for generations.

A week from to-morrow this historical picture will be replaced by two European features, both Kleine productions, "Pierrot, the Frolic" and "The Naked Truth." The first is a three-part adaptation from the opera of the same name. It is a quaint allegorical story entirely new to this country. Francesca Bertini, who is already widely known to motion picture enthusiasts in this country, plays the role.

"The Naked Truth" is based on the French novel, "La Femme Nue," a story of a woman's great love and her disillusionment. The powerful role of Lolotte is played by Lydia Borelli, a European picture star.

"HEARTS OF OAK."

The feature number at the Strand Theatre for the week will be James A. Herne's comedy of rural life, "Hearts of Oak." Besides being a film version of a widely known play, the production is interesting as the first effort of the recently organized Mohawk Film Company. The picture was produced in the early part of the spring, the exteriors being



IN THE PALACE OF SOPHONISBA ONE OF THE SUPERB SCENES FROM "CABRIA" AT THE KNICKERBOCKER THEATRE



MURIEL OSTRICHE "THE PRINCESS OF PRINCESS FILMS"

made along the coast of Maine. The principal role is played by Violet Horner, who is supported by a capable cast.

A few unusual scenes are shown, but for the most part there is no startling originality of construction or arrangement. The story will probably prove interesting to those who liked it as a play, although it retains all of its stupendous improbability.

As usual, the bill will be supplemented with short pictures and musical numbers.

IN ITS THIRD WEEK.

The present bill at the Vitaphone Theatre is the best one which has yet been seen there. "Captain Alvarez," the feature of the programme, is an excellent picture, characterized by good settings, attractive exteriors and capable acting. It concerns a revolution in the Argentine, which results in the setting up of the present republic. The events in the picture are founded on fact. It is an adaptation of the play of the same name, and was made at Santa Monica, Cal.

"Wife Wanted" is a diverting comedy of the films, while "The New Stenographer" gives the audience a chance to see a number of popular screen players in a really funny pantomime. A number of topical and novelty pictures are shown as curtain raisers.

"NEPTUNE'S DAUGHTER."

The sixth week of the run of "Neptune's Daughter," featuring Annette Kellerman, began at the Globe Theatre yesterday. Very few feature films have enjoyed so long an exhibition on Broadway, but this is a production of decided merit. Miss Kellerman's versatility, together with the novel and attractive scenes, makes the picture an enjoyable one.

The Vitaphone-Debut production of "The Christian" by Hall Caine, continues at the Harris Theatre. The picture is one of the notable achievements in the line of feature film manufacture. The story of the famous novel is followed closely and with careful attention to detail.

"The Line-Up at Police Headquarters," in which ex-Deputy Police Commissioner Dougherty is featured, is on exhibition at the Lyric Theatre. It is a story of present day conditions in New York, but makes no effort to point a moral or to dabble in sociological problems.

Another feature film producing concern has just been launched. It is to be known as Popular Plays and Players, Inc., and has been organized by a group of theatrical men headed by L. Lawrence Weber. The pictures which the company will handle will be made by the Lubin company, and the players will be drawn in part from the legitimate stage and in part from the Lubin stock company.

LIVELY DAYS THESE

Programme of Events at Movie Show an Elaborate One.

In connection with the opening of the Second International Moving Picture Trades Exposition in Grand Central Palace, on June 3, Chairman A. A. Corn announces a schedule of entertainment for the delegates which indicates considerable activity on the part of the exhibitors. On Tuesday, June 3, there will be a trip to Brighton Beach, with a clam bake and general tour of the various amusement resorts in that vicinity. Wednesday has been selected as the date on which the visitors will attend a specially arranged programme on the New York Roof Garden, including participation in dancing contests.

A moonlight excursion on the steamer Adirondack, with cabaret and tango accompaniments, has been arranged for Thursday, and on Friday a banquet to the various manufacturers and traders at the Hotel Biltmore will be enhanced by the appearance of many of the leading players.

Saturday evening will be spent in the Grand Central Palace with a varied assortment of entertainment, the chief event of which is to be the prize contest and distribution of souvenirs, in which the Screen Club promises a surprise, and farewell dance.

During each day of the week, in the afternoon, all of the manufacturers who have studios in New York and vicinity will maintain an open house to all the visiting exhibitors, and in addition to the foregoing entertainment features they will show to those interested in the affairs of the motion picture world the method by which each company produces its films.

DR. CRAFTS HELPS.

At a recent hearing on the bill to establish a Federal Motion Picture Commission an argument in favor of the scheme was made by Dr. Wilbur F. Crafts, superintendent of the International Reform Bureau. Fortunately for the interests of the public and the makers and exhibitors of pictures, the facts which Dr. Crafts advances are all ones which go to show why the bill should be killed. Of course, he did not draw such conclusions from them, but it is to be hoped that the committee will.

National censorship of motion pictures is well cared for now by the National Board of Censorship, as we pointed out several weeks ago. Without going into details, the single fact that the present bill is an attempt to create a politically organized censoring body should be sufficient to condemn it. However good the

intentions of those backing the movement may be, a commission organized along the lines laid down in the Smith-Hughes bill would simply result in the exploitation of motion pictures for the benefit of politicians. The motion picture industry stands among the largest six in the United States, but that is no reason for making it stand and deliver. Up to the present time it has been unimpaired by those who seek to collect tribute from successful industries.

The Smith-Hughes bill is one of those ideas which, while conceived with the



Blanche Sweet in "The Escape" at the Court Theatre

best of intentions, is positively pernicious. Such faults as do exist in the present censoring system would not be remedied in any way by it, but an extraordinary opportunity for graft and extortion would be created for those who chanced to be "in right" among the bosses.

CONAN DOYLE FILMS.

The recent exhibition of "Rodney Stone" was hardly necessary to demonstrate the excellent material for motion pictures which is contained in the writings of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. A number of film producers have been seeking picture rights to the famous author's stories for some time, but the work mentioned above is the only one which has yet been shown on the screen.

It is now announced that the present visit of Sir Arthur to New York City is to conclude arrangements for the transfer of the motion picture rights to his works entire. The "Sherlock Holmes" series, as well as the longer tales, will all be produced. It is understood that William Gillette will play the principal roles in the pictures.

PATHE TO HAVE DAILY.

A daily news film has been talked of frequently, and it will soon be a reality. The Pathe company announces that in the near future the popular Pathe's weekly will be replaced by a daily news production to be known as "Pathe's Daily News." The exact date of the first number has not yet been decided.

In order to facilitate the rapid distribution of reels which the new arrangement will make necessary the films will be sent direct from the factory each day and will not be handled by the exchanges.

COMIC OPERA IN "TALKIES."

The Webb talking and singing pictures which have been on view at the Fulton Theatre will shortly be used for a new sort of revival of the Gilbert and Sullivan

Muriel Is Handed a Lot of Praise But It Doesn't Turn Her Head, Though Only Eighteen.

TO be a leading lady and the head of your own company at just eighteen was enough to turn the heads of many girls, but it has no such effect on Muriel Ostriche.

Muriel is as charming and unaffected as if she had never heard a word of praise in her life, although that is as far as possible from her actual experience. Of course, any pretty girl of eighteen has her admirers, but not many can number them by thousands. We realized that popular motion picture actresses have a tremendously wide and extended influence, but a call at Miss Ostriche's home showed us that in her case at least, we had greatly underestimated the interest which the public takes in her.

By way of starting a conversation, we asked her whether she had many letters from picture fans.

"Just a few," she replied. "I'll get some and let you look at them."

Business of waiting a few minutes, when there suddenly appeared approaching a huge pile of letters, behind which Muriel was barely discernible. We hastened to her aid, and the stack was soon heaped upon the table and the adjacent floor. It made the parlor look like the interior of a railway mail car just after the clerks have broached the sacks.

Any attempt to read the heap would have been useless, but fortunately Muriel could spot some of the best by the color of the paper. A brief but full experience has taught her that the silliest and strangest letters are always written on some of that weirdly tinted notepaper that the corner drug store sells as the latest importation.

One of these letters purported to come from a thirteen-year-old cripple, whose only pleasure in life was when he was wheeled to the movie theatre. He begged Miss Ostriche to send him a picture, as he regarded her as his ideal. Naturally, such a pathetic appeal resulted in the immediate sending of a photograph, but imagine the little lady's disgust when a second letter from the same person told her that he was not what he had said at all, but a healthy young broker of twenty-five, and that his first letter had been a test of her kind-heartedness.

Probably her picture and note of sympathy convinced him that Miss Muriel was worthy of what he fondly but mistakenly imagines himself to be, and he supposed that she would at once be captivated by his cunning ways.

"I didn't even write him to return my picture, I was so annoyed by his cheap lying," remarked Miss Ostriche.

A whole set of letters from a well known preparatory school offers a diverting side light on schoolboy nature. It seems that one boy in the school had in some way obtained a photograph of Miss Ostriche, and had proudly exhibited it to some of his classmates. A number of them at once wrote to the screen star, and the tenor of all the letters is the same, namely, that the writer is grieved to see her picture in the hands of the boy who has it, as he does not have a proper regard for her, but that if she will send him one, then she can be sure that a real admirer has it and that it will be cherished.

Another cycle of letters is from a member of the West Point football team, who also sent a nearly life size photograph of himself. These are good, many epistles, largely devoted to honoring the confining nature of life at the Military Academy, and expressing respectful admiration.

But the communications are by no means confined to foolish youths. There are scores of them from women of all ages and positions, and they are crowded with human interest. Perhaps more than any others, Miss Muriel appreciates those which come from working girls and women into whose colorless lives she carries inspiration and encouragement through motion pictures.

"I am only a poor little stenographer in a big law office," one such letter from an Iowa city begins, "but I hope you won't mind my writing to tell you how much I adore you and enjoy seeing you in the pictures." And there are many more in the same vein, which makes it seem small wonder that Miss Ostriche likes her work.

The sudden rise and, in all probability, her appearance in any way in motion pictures are really due to the unerring eye of a French director, formerly at the Eclair studios, in Fort Lee.

"My mother," explained Muriel, "said I was a silly little girl when I asked to be allowed to try for some extra parts in pictures. She told me I ought to stick to my high school work and become a school teacher, as I was expecting to do. Imagine me as a school teacher!" she added with a ripple of laughter.

"It takes too much imagination," we returned.

"Mother finally saw I was so keen for it that when the Pathe company called up one day, having had my name on file for a long time, she let me go over to Jersey City. I had a lot of fun there, but the very next day the Eclair studio called, and, of course, I got mother to let me go."

"I thought I was foolish to do it," commented Mrs. Ostriche, who was present, "but it looks as if mothers may sometimes be mistaken, after all."

"Over at Fort Lee they were getting ready for a picture which had to do with a girls' boarding school, and they had a lot of extras there. The director lined us all up, and went down the row looking us over as if we were animals on exhibition. It made me sort of wish I hadn't come, but all of a sudden he took my arm and led me 'out' in front. It is you I want, mam'selle," he said. "It is you that shall play the lead; only, first, there are many things that we must teach you, but we will do it quickly."

"In other words, you became a leading lady in your first picture?" we inquired.

"Well, not exactly, as I had done a couple of extra parts before; but, believe me, it was not so easy. There certainly were many things that they had to teach me, and they wanted them learned very quickly, as the director had said. But I was so happy that I didn't mind the hard work, and even mother had to admit that it was sort of nice."

After a short time across the river Miss Ostriche went to the Majestic pictures and then to Thanhouser. Up at New Rochelle her career was fully recognized and a special brand was created for her benefit. These were appropriately called "Princess" films, and Muriel was made the leading lady, with Boyd Marshall as the masculine principal. Her very first picture was hardly three years ago, but she has been a favorite from the start. However, as we remarked at the beginning, popularity has not turned her head. She lives in New York with her parents, and goes up to New Rochelle every day. She is a typical American girl of eighteen, full of the joy of life, sensible and whole-hearted and altogether delightful. It is fortunate that the public can see her sort on the motion picture screen.

In New York. There are a number of pictures which will have to be done over entirely, as the only copies extant were destroyed in the blaze at the 101st st. factory.

Cleo Madison is always giving new examples of pluck. She was so reluctant to delay work that she insisted on going on with her acting before her burned feet were in shape. She fainted from pain finally and the doctor was compelled to speak firmly about any repetition of such an effort.

Mona Darkfeather's husband, Frank Montgomery, drove up to the house in a big shiny, new motor car the other day. When she went out to look at it she saw a plate inscribed "Princess Mona Darkfeather."

Myrtle Stedman, Hobart Rosworth's leading woman in the Jack London stories, is earning new fame on the coast by occasionally singing in public. Those who have heard her say that the concert stage lost when the screen gained.

Harry Edwards is so keen for realism that he recently had Louise Blum allow a bear to give her a real bear hug. Of course it was a tame bear, but Louise says, "Never again."

Grace Cunard, the heroine of the "Lucille Love" series, has received an offer to play the lead in a similar series written by a prominent author. It is probable that she will accept.

Henry McKee's company of players will sail from Honolulu this week. During the three months that they have been there they have taken many tropical pictures.

Elna Mason keeps her parents more or less on the anxious seat owing to the fact that she is approached about once a week by managers who want her to go into musical comedy. So far, however, none of them has interested her.

Life is one round of parties after another out at the Coast studios these days. J. P. McGowan is one of the popular hosts. He recently gave a big dance at Glendale.

William D. Taylor received a telegram recently congratulating him on his work in "Captain Alvarez" and warning him to look out for the letters asking for photographs which were sure to come. According to Mr. Taylor the first of the letters followed rapidly on the telegram.

Edwin August is said to be producing a film with a totally new idea running through it. Sounds like too much to expect even from Edwin.

Adele Lane is the patron of the infant animals of the Selig zoo. She spends a good part of her spare time feeding them and otherwise brightening their outlook on life.

The forces of "The Dummy" at the Hudson Theatre have been strengthened for the all-summer run, by the addition to the cast of Miss Jane Grey, the young actress recently in "Every woman," whose work in "Love Among the Lions" is fresh in the minds of New York theatregoers. The forces of the "Dummy" at the Hudson Theatre have been strengthened for the all-summer run, by the addition to the cast of Miss Jane Grey, the young actress recently in "Every woman," whose work in "Love Among the Lions" is fresh in the minds of New York theatregoers. The forces of the "Dummy" at the Hudson Theatre have been strengthened for the all-summer run, by the addition to the cast of Miss Jane Grey, the young actress recently in "Every woman," whose work in "Love Among the Lions" is fresh in the minds of New York theatregoers.